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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/16/2018

TAGS: KWBG PBTS IS KISL

SUBJECT: PALESTINIANS CONDEMN DICHTER VISIT TO HARAM
AL-SHARIF/TEMPLE MOUNT

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Islamic Waqf contacts confirmed that Israeli Public Security Minister Avi Dichter (Kadima) visited the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City the morning of January 15, escorted by dozens of Israeli police. In a January 16 conversation, Azzam al-Khatib, chief of Jerusalem's Islamic Waqf, said Dichter entered the compound through Mughrabi Gate at 0745 loca. Al-Khatib called the visit a provocation intended to bolster Israeli control over the site and said the visit annoyed local Palestinians. Shaykh Muhammad Hussayn, Mufti of Jerusalem and the PA, complained that "the al-Aqsa Mosque should not be used as a platform for Israeli ministers to prove their right-wing credibility," and said the visit was provocative and hurts the feelings of all Muslims. He warned that such visits inflame tensions and can lead to violence, noting that Ariel Sharon's September 2000 visit to the compound sparked the second Intifadah.

¶2. (C) Hatim Abd al-Qadr, PM Salam Fayyad's Advisor for Jerusalem Affairs, commented in a January 16 conversation that the timing of Dichter's visit was intentionally aimed at undermining the peace process and called for an end to such visits. He said such visits provoke problems at a time when all parties should direct their efforts toward creating a positive environment for the peace process. He commented that radicals in Israeli government and society are determined to thwart peace efforts.

WALLES